



**United States
Department Of
Agriculture**

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Improving USDA Commodities

(Special FedWorld Edition)

Introduction

USDA established the Commodity Improvement Council in May 1994 to emphasize its commitment to improving the quality and nutritional content of the products it purchases while maintaining support for domestic agricultural markets. The Council is composed of the Under Secretaries for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services; Farm and Foreign Agriculture Services; and, the Assistant Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. The Council addresses a full range of issues which have an impact on the food purchases made in support of the USDA's food assistance programs.

While the Department has made significant improvements to specific products over the years and enhanced the variety of foods available to schools and other program recipients, the Council recommended a comprehensive review of all USDA commodity specifications. The focus of this review was to determine whether further modifications could be made to reduce fat, sodium and/or sugar levels.

To accomplish this task, a Tri-Agency Task Force was established by the Department to conduct the review and present recommendations to the Council. The task force consisted of staff from the Food and Consumer Service (FCS), the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA). This report provides the results of their review and the recommendations approved by the Council.

Table of Contents

(Special FedWorld Edition)

OVERVIEW	1
USDA's Commodity Distribution Programs	1
School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children	1
USDA's Commodity Improvement Council	1
Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Project	2
 TASK FORCE REPORT	 3
Background	3
Review Objective	4
Findings and Recommendations	4
Fat	5
Sodium	6
Sugar	7
Potential New Products	8
 CONCLUSION	 9
 APPENDICES	 10
Appendix 1) Summary of the 1995-96 Commodity Improvements	10
Appendix 2) List of Past Commodity Improvements (1984-85 to 1994-95)	13
 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	 15

Improving USDA Commodities

(FedWorld Edition)

Overview

USDA's Commodity Distribution Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is responsible both for assuring that U.S. citizens have an abundant, affordable food supply and for providing food support for the country's food assistance programs. The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) are the USDA agencies that provide farm support, while the Food and Consumer Service (FCS) administers the food assistance programs at the Federal level. The three agencies work together as "partners in agriculture" to provide the commodity assistance portion of FCS' food assistance programs for the Nation's children and needy citizens. Other important partners are the State and recipient agencies that are on the front line delivering food benefits to program participants.

USDA provides millions of pounds of high quality food products to State agencies for distribution through their food assistance programs. AMS purchases products such as beef, poultry, fish, fruits and vegetables to support the agricultural economy by removing products from the commercial market in times of over-production. FSA purchases grain, peanut, oilseed, and dairy products for the food assistance programs administered by FCS. These purchases fulfill legislative mandates.

During 1994-95, USDA purchased approximately 1.5 billion pounds of commodities valued at approximately \$923 million for all Federal food assistance programs including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), soup kitchens, food banks, elderly programs, charitable institutions, day care programs, Food Distribution Programs on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) and Commodity Supplemental Food Program.

Of all the commodities distributed in 1994-95, approximately 70 percent (1 billion pounds) were purchased for schools at an estimated cost of \$668 million. This represents approximately 17 percent of the total amount of food served in schools. Schools have been working with USDA to improve the quality of the meals they serve and to identify the products they need to receive from USDA to accomplish this task. Since schools receive such a significant portion of the commodities USDA purchases, their input is extremely important.

School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children

In June 1994, USDA announced the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children--a comprehensive, integrated proposal to ensure that the Nation's children have healthy meals at school. The initiative, a plan for continuous improvement in the school meal programs, was built upon a 4-point framework for action that involves regulatory changes along with nutrition education to teach and motivate children about healthy food choices and training for school food service professionals.

Commodity Improvement Council

The initiative also calls for maximizing resources. To support this priority, the Department established the Commodity Improvement Council in May 1994. The Council is composed of the Under Secretaries for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services and Farm and Foreign Agriculture Services and the Assistant Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs.

This Council's goal is to promote the health of school children and other program participants by improving the nutritional profile of USDA commodity offerings, while maintaining the Department's support for domestic agricultural markets. The Council addresses a full range of issues which have an impact on the food purchases made in support of the food assistance programs.

Over the years, the Department has worked to improve the quality and nutritional content of the products it purchases. It led the way in 1980 by requiring that all fruits be packed in light syrup or natural juices. It also eliminated the use of tropical oils for all its products. USDA promoted the development of new products that were lower in fat, such as beef patties with a 10-11 percent fat content and bulk ground beef and bulk ground pork with the fat content lowered from 22-24 to 17-19 percent since 1984-85 (see Appendix 2).

In addition, the Department increased its offerings of poultry products and added new lower fat items such as ground turkey and turkey sausage. Other new items included reduced fat cheddar cheese, lite mozzarella cheese, canned salsa, and fully cooked beef patties. Also, in SY 1993-94, USDA more than doubled the quantity of a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables distributed to schools.

While these steps made significant improvements to specific products and enhanced the variety of the products available, the Council recommended a comprehensive review of the specifications for all commodity products to determine whether further modifications could be made to reduce the fat, salt and sugar content.

A Tri-Agency Task Force, consisting of staff from FCS, AMS and FSA was established by the Department to conduct the review and present recommendations to the Council. This report provides the results of the task force's review and the recommendations approved by the Council.

The Council also has approved the redesign of the Commodity Acceptability Report, which is the mechanism program participants use to communicate their evaluation of and preferences for the commodities USDA provides. Through this report, States and program recipients indicate which items they like and dislike and recommend new products. The redesign will reduce the reporting burden while improving the quality of the information needed by USDA to make more informative commodity purchasing decisions for the following school year.

Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Project

In addition to actions recommended by the Council, USDA has undertaken other commodity improvement initiatives for the school lunch program. One innovative option tested last year was the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Project. Through this pilot, the Department of Defense (DOD) purchased fresh produce on USDA's behalf and delivered it to schools in eight States. Under the pilot system, participating schools order directly from DOD from a product availability list and indicate desired delivery dates.

States and schools have been very pleased with the quality, condition, appearance, and extensive selection of products. The project has enabled them to increase their offerings of produce to children and introduce them to new fresh fruits and vegetables. Because of the success of the pilot, this project will be expanded to 32 States in 1995-96.

All of these improvement activities reflect USDA's commitment to provide healthful, high quality products through its recipient agencies to the Nation's children and low-income citizens. The special steps USDA is taking under the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children will contribute to better nutrition for all recipients of USDA commodities.

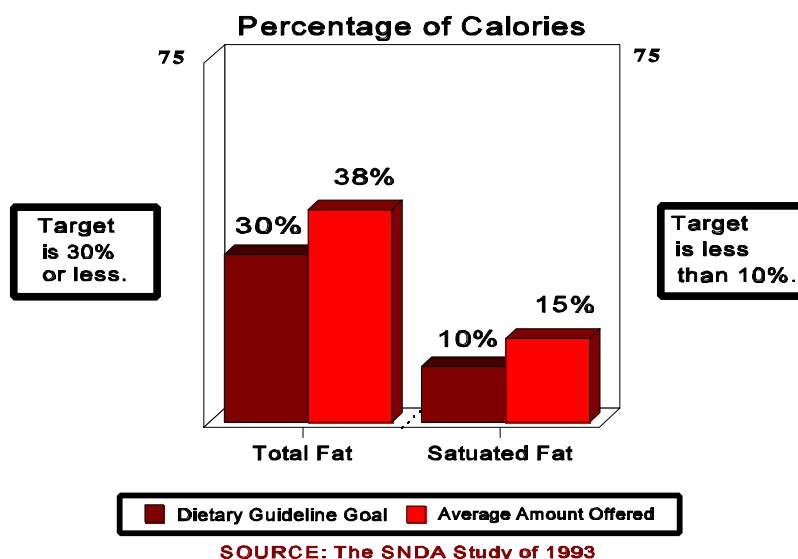
Task Force Report

Background

On September 13, 1993, USDA published a Federal Register Notice asking the public to comment on improving nutrition in our school meals. The Department sponsored four regional hearings on "Nutrition Objectives for School Meals." More than 350 people testified at the hearings and over 2,000 people sent written comments, representing a wide cross section of the population. The hearings were followed by in-depth consultations with representatives of a variety of groups.

Using the input from the hearings and meetings, the Department drafted the proposed School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children rule. The rule was also built on a foundation of scientific evidence of the critical relationship between diet and health and on the findings of USDA's School Nutrition Dietary Assessment (SNDA) study. This study concluded that while school lunches met or exceeded one-third of the Recommended Daily Allowance (RDA) for key nutrients and food energy, they exceed the specific RDA recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans goals for fat and saturated fat (Figure 1).

Figure 1
NSLP Lunches Do Not Meet the Dietary Guideline Goals for Total Fat and Saturated Fat.



This process also gave USDA the opportunity to identify and respond to commodity improvement issues. Testimony from the hearings and written comments generally supported the goal that school meals meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend specific quantitative goals for fat and saturated fat. The Guidelines do not provide quantitative goals for other food components; however, they do recommend that salt, sodium, and sugar be used in moderation in an overall diet. More than 1000 commenters raised concerns about the level of fat in school meals.

Of the commenters that addressed commodities specifically, 275 indicated that a healthier assortment should be made available to States; 125 encouraged the Department to reduce the amounts of fat, cholesterol and sodium in the commodities; and another 60 recommended that commodities comply with the Dietary Guidelines. In addition, 100 commenters discussed the Department's fresh fruit and

vegetable initiatives.

In response to the information gathered through the hearing and comment process, the Commodity Improvement Council recommended a comprehensive review of the specifications for all commodity products and established a Tri-Agency Task Force to conduct the review.

Review Objective

The objective of the task force review was to identify commodities which could be improved by modifying their fat, sodium or sugar levels, while making sure that the products are acceptable to school children. Once these products were identified by the task force, recommendations were presented to the Council for approval.

Findings and Recommendations

As a result of this comprehensive interagency review of USDA commodity specifications, more than two-thirds (96) of the 142 commodities distributed to program recipients were excluded from further modification because they are typically purchased in their simplest, most natural or unprocessed form. These include such food items as fruits, vegetables, grain products, and most unprocessed poultry products such as turkey and chicken which are generally low in fat.

Of the remaining 46 commodities considered for improvement, the Council approved 23--or 50 percent--for modification. Some of these commodities were excluded from further change because any additional reductions in their fat, sodium or sugar levels would likely make them unacceptable to recipients.

The task force also recommended that the Department continue working with our industry partners and States to determine the feasibility of developing several new products which are low in fat and would help program recipients meet the Dietary Guidelines. These include:

- Light Butter
- Low-Fat Macaroni and Cheese
- Meatless Spaghetti Sauce
- Prune Puree (a fat substitute)
- Reduced-Fat Cheese Sauce
- Turkey Ham, Boneless, 95 percent fat-free

While significant commodity improvements have already been made, the Department will continue to improve the quality of the products it purchases. Following is a description of the commodity modifications presented to, and approved by, the Council, along with the actions already taken or to be taken by USDA to implement these commodity improvements.

MODIFICATIONS IN FAT

The fat levels listed for the meat products described below represent the level acceptable without and with a penalty discount allowed by USDA)e.g., the maximum fat content for bulk ground beef without a discount is 17 percent. Product is accepted with a penalty discount up to 19 percent. To encourage processors to produce products without penalty, USDA establishes a discount that is economically burdensome for the company.

A processor can avoid this penalty and receive the full contract price, if the product contains the fat level below the discount range. Consequently, processors typically produce meat products below the discount range allowed by USDA.

Bakery Mix

Purchase a low-fat bakery mix to determine acceptability. A low-fat bakery mix, which contains approximately 2.5 grams of fat per 40 gram serving, will be test purchased to determine recipient acceptability. Under the current formulation, a 40 gram serving contains approximately 5.6 grams of fat.

Canned Luncheon Meat

Reduce the fat content of canned luncheon meat from 22-25 percent to 19-22 percent. USDA implemented this recommendation in 1994-95. The Department will continue to work with program recipients and industry to determine the feasibility of making further fat reductions. Typically, commercially produced canned luncheon meat is available with a maximum fat content of 30 percent per Agriculture Handbook (AHB) No. 8-7, "*Composition of Foods...*" which is the published form of commercial information on file in USDA's National Nutrient Database.

Canned Refried Beans

Purchase canned refried beans with no added fat to determine acceptability. This product will be purchased in 1995-96 with no added fat to determine acceptability. A recent test conducted by USDA indicated that the product may be well accepted. Prior to this change, the product contained approximately 0.7 grams of fat per 1/4 cup serving.

Coarse Ground Beef and Coarse Ground Pork (for reprocessing)

Reduce the maximum fat content by at least one-percentage point per year from 20-21 percent to 17-18 percent by 1997-98 to test acceptability. These products are available on a limited basis through retail outlets. According to Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) regulations, the maximum fat content allowed for these commercial products is 30 percent. The commodity product is used in reprocessing contracts only.

Frozen Ground Beef and Frozen Ground Pork

Reduce the maximum fat content by at least one-percentage point per year from 17-19 percent in 1995-96 to 15-17 percent by 1997-98 to test acceptability. The maximum fat content allowed by FSIS for these products is 30 percent. AHB No. 8-13 lists commercial raw ground beef at three different fat levels--i.e., 17 percent, 21 percent, and 26 percent, while commercial raw ground pork is listed as 21 percent fat in AHB No. 8-10.

Frozen Potato Wedges

Purchase frozen potato wedges as an alternative to frozen potato rounds and french fried potatoes. Potato wedges have approximately 50 percent less fat than: (1) potato rounds which contain 3.8 grams of fat per 1/4 cup serving; and (2) frozen french fried (oven type) potatoes which contain between 2.4 and 2.9 grams of fat per 1/4 cup serving. Since this product was successfully tested in

1994-95, potato wedges are now currently available to States as a regular entitlement option.

Lite Mozzarella Cheese

Purchase a lite mozzarella cheese. Lite mozzarella cheese, which contains a maximum of 10.8 percent fat, was successfully tested in a limited number of schools during 1994-95. Since the product was well accepted by these schools, States currently have the option of ordering this type of cheese as an alternative to USDA's part-skimmed milk mozzarella cheese which contains a maximum of 21 percent fat.

Reduced Fat Peanut Butter

Work with industry to test a reduced-fat peanut butter acceptable to schools USDA is working with industry to begin testing and evaluating a reduced fat peanut butter which contains approximately 12 grams of fat per two-tablespoons serving versus regular peanut butter which contains 16.4 grams of fat per serving.

MODIFICATIONS IN SODIUM

Canned Beef and Canned Pork

Reduce the salt content in canned beef and canned pork from 1 percent to approximately 0.5 percent to determine impact. There is a very limited market for equivalent commercial products, which are consistent with USDA specifications.

Canned Carrots

Purchase canned carrots with no added salt. USDA successfully tested canned carrots without salt in 1994-95. They will be offered as a regular entitlement option in 1995-96. Canned carrots previously purchased contained approximately 1 percent salt.

Canned Luncheon Meat

Reduce the salt content in canned luncheon meat from a maximum of 3 percent to a maximum of 2.5 percent. The sodium content in commercial canned luncheon meat is 1.3 percent according to AHB No. 8-7.

Canned Poultry

Eliminate added salt from canned poultry (turkey or chicken). USDA will purchase canned poultry without added salt to test acceptability. This product can be in the form of chicken or turkey. Salt has been progressively reduced in these products since 1974 from a range of 1.1 - 1.3 percent to a current range of 0.5 - 0.7 percent. There is no industry equivalent for this product. USDA uses fowl in its canned poultry while industry is increasingly using broiler chickens.

Canned Refried Beans

Reduce the salt content in canned refried beans from 1 percent to 0.5 percent This lowered salt product was tested successfully in 1994-95 and will be offered as a regular entitlement item in 1995-96.

Canned Salmon and Canned Tuna

Reduce the maximum amount of added salt in canned salmon and canned tuna from 1.5 percent to approximately 1 percent. This modification will make these canned products more consistent with equivalent commercial products.

Fortified Cereals Ready-To-Eat (RTE)

Reduce the added sodium content in all RTE cereals from a maximum of 355 milligram (mg) to a maximum of 280 mg per 30 gram serving The cereals include: (1) Fortified RTE corn cereal; (2) Fortified RTE rice cereal; (3) Fortified RTE oat cereal; and (4) Fortified RTE wheat cereal. This recommendation was implemented at the beginning of 1995-96 and represents a 21 percent reduction in sodium.

Pork Ham

Reduce the added salt content in commodity ham by approximately 25 percent from the current 1.2 percent salt content. According to AHB No. 8-10, the sodium content in commercial ham is 1.3 percent.

MODIFICATIONS IN SUGAR

Canned Sweet Potatoes

Purchase canned sweet potatoes packed in fruit juice instead of syrup to evaluate its impact and acceptability. USDA will continue testing and evaluating the impact of purchasing canned sweet potatoes with fruit juice versus syrup.

Red Tart Cherries

Reduce the sugar level in red tart cherries by purchasing a product with a ratio of 7-pounds of fruit to 1-pound of sugar (or "7 plus 1"). USDA also will continue purchasing sugar-free canned water-packed cherries to test acceptability. The industry standard for red tart cherries is 5 plus 1 and contains substantially more sugar than the 7 plus 1 red tart cherries. This product will be offered to all States in 1995-96.

POTENTIAL NEW PRODUCTS

Light Butter

Make a test purchase of light butter to determine its acceptability. USDA made a test purchase of light butter in 1994-95 to determine its acceptability by schools This product contains a maximum fat content of 40 percent compared to regular butter which has a fat content of over 80 percent. The results of this test indicated that schools were concerned that light butter could not be

used for baking. However, USDA will purchase light butter in the future, if there is sufficient demand by the States.

Low-Fat Macaroni and Cheese

Purchase a low-fat macaroni and cheese as a regular commodity option. This product was successfully tested in 1994-95 and is currently available to FDPIR participants as a regular commodity option. The Department is exploring the applicability of making this product available to institutions such as schools. This product contains approximately 5 grams of fat per 1 ounce serving.

Meatless Spaghetti Sauce

Purchase meatless spaghetti sauce as a regular entitlement option. This product was successfully tested in schools in 1994-95 and will be offered to all States in 1995-96 A laboratory analysis will be conducted by USDA to determine the fat content of this new product. Equivalent commercial products contain approximately 3 grams of fat per 1/2 cup serving.

Prune Puree

Explore the feasibility of purchasing prune puree as a fat substitute. USDA will continue working with industry to develop a more acceptable and consistent formulation This product could be useful as a fat substitute. School lunch recipes have been successfully developed and standardized for applesauce which is also a fat substitute.

Reduced Fat Cheese Sauce

Work with industry and recipients to explore the feasibility of developing specifications for a reduced fat American cheese sauce. USDA will continue working with industry and recipients to determine the feasibility of developing specifications for an American cheese sauce which could be used as a dip, on potatoes, pasta or macaroni products. The maximum fat content for this product would not exceed 22.9 percent, the maximum allowed for reduced fat cheddar cheese.

Turkey Ham

Purchase a 95 percent fat-free boneless turkey ham as a regular entitlement option This product was successfully tested in 1994-95, and will be available to States and schools as a regular entitlement option in 1995-96.

Conclusion

All the recommendations approved by the Council are expected to be implemented by the end of 1995-96. USDA has already begun purchasing products which are lower in fat, sodium and sugar as discussed in this report. Appendix 1 provides a consolidated list of the recommendations approved by the Council. It also includes a lists of potential new products recommended by the Council which are low in fat, sodium or sugar, some of which are already being purchased or tested by USDA.

The desire to provide commodities which are lower in fat, sodium and sugar will be balanced with the acceptability of these products by recipients and industry's interest in producing them. USDA endorses the concept that there are no "good" foods or "bad" foods. The Dietary Guidelines recommend that people eat a variety of foods; choose a diet with plenty of vegetables, fruits, and grain products; and use sugar and

sodium in moderation.

These changes, coupled with the improvements made by USDA over the years (see Appendix 2) should contribute significantly toward improving the quality of commodities distributed to States and program recipients. USDA's goal is to ensure that the nation's children receive commodities that promote their health, taste good, and will help meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

* * *

Figure 2

1995-96 Commodity Improvements

Targeted Commodities	Fat, Sodium and Sugar Reductions Approved By USDA
1. Bakery Mix	▶ Purchase a low-fat bakery mix.
2. Beef, Canned	▶ Reduce added salt content from 1 percent to approximately 0.5 percent.
3. Beef, Coarse Ground (for reprocessing)	▶ Reduce maximum fat content from 20-21 percent to 17-18 percent by 1997-98. ¹
4. Beef, Frozen Ground . .	▶ Reduce maximum fat content from 17-19 to 15-17 percent by 1997-98. ¹
5. Carrots, Canned	▶ Purchase canned carrots with no added salt.
6. Canned Poultry	▶ Purchase canned poultry (chicken or turkey) with no added salt.
7. Cereal, Corn RTE	▶ Reduce added sodium content from a maximum of 355 mg to a maximum of 280 mg per 30 gram serving.
8. Cereal, Oat RTE	▶ Same sodium reduction as made for Corn Cereal.
9. Cereal, Rice RTE	▶ Same sodium reduction as made for Corn Cereal.
10. Cereal, Wheat	▶ Same sodium reduction as made for Corn Cereal.
11. Cheese, Lite Mozzarella	▶ Purchase a lite mozzarella cheese with a maximum fat content of 10.8 percent as an alternative to part-skimmed milk mozzarella cheese which contains a maximum of 21 percent fat.
12. Cherries, Red Tart	▶ (1) Reduce sugar level by purchasing a product with a ratio of 7-lbs. of fruit to 1-lb. of sugar, or "7 plus 1". ▶ (2) Continue purchasing sugar-free, water-packed cherries to determine impact.

¹The fat content will be reduced by at least one-percentage point per year until goal is reached.

Appendix 1
(2 OF 3)

Figure 2 - Continued

Targeted Commodities	Fat, Sodium and Sugar Reductions Approved By USDA
13. Frozen Potato Wedges . .	▶ Purchase frozen potato wedges as an alternative to frozen potato rounds and french fried potatoes (oven type).
14. Luncheon Meat, Canned .	▶ (1) Reduce maximum fat content from 22-25 percent to 19-22 percent. ▶ (2) Reduce added salt content from a maximum of 3 percent to a maximum of 2.5 percent.
15. Pork, Canned	▶ Reduce added salt content from 1 percent to approximately 0.5 percent.
16. Pork, Coarse Ground (for reprocessing)	▶ Reduce fat content from 20-21 percent to 17-18 percent by 1997-98. ¹
17. Pork, Ground Fine	▶ Reduce maximum fat content from 17-19 percent in 1995-96 to 15-17 percent by 1997-98. ¹
18. Pork, Ham, Boneless . . .	▶ Reduce added salt content approximately 25 percent from the current 1.2 percent salt content.
19. Reduced Fat Peanut Butter	▶ Purchase a reduced fat peanut butter with a maximum fat content of approximately 12 grams of fat per two-tablespoons serving.
20. Salmon, Canned	▶ Reduce the maximum amount of added salt from 1.5 percent to approximately 1 percent.
21. Sweet Potatoes, Canned .	▶ Purchase canned sweet potatoes packed in fruit juice instead of syrup.
22. Tuna, Canned	▶ Reduce the maximum amount of added salt from 1.5 percent to approximately 1 percent.

23. Refried Beans, Canned . .

- ▶ Purchase refried beans with no added fat to test acceptability and reduce salt content from 1 percent to 0.5 percent.

Appendix 1
(3 of 3)

Figure 3

Potential New Products

Light Butter

- ▶ Conduct a limited test purchase of light butter to determine interest in the product.

Low-Fat Macaroni and Cheese .

- ▶ (1) Purchase low-fat macaroni and cheese as a regular commodity option for households participating in the FDPIR; and

(2) Explore the applicability and feasibility of purchasing this product for institutions such as schools.

Meatless Spaghetti Sauce

- ▶ Purchase meatless spaghetti sauce as a regular entitlement option.

Prune Puree

- ▶ Investigate the feasibility of purchasing prune puree as a fat substitute.

Reduced Fat Cheese Sauce . . .

- ▶ Work with industry and recipients to explore the feasibility of developing specifications for a reduced fat American cheese sauce.

Turkey Ham, Boneless

- ▶ Purchase 95 percent fat-free boneless turkey ham as a regular entitlement option.

Appendix 2
(1 of 2)

Past Commodity Improvements
(SY 1984-85 to SY 1994-95)

Figure 4 - Fat Modifications In Meat/Poultry/Other Products

COMMODITY	FAT MODIFICATIONS
BEEF/PORK	
Frozen Ground Beef Patties	Reduced from 22-24% to 18-20%) 18% reduction.
Beef Patties With VPP	Reduced from 20-22% to 16-18%) 20% reduction.
Beef Patties, Lean (purchased in 1990-91)	Reduced from 10-12% to 10-11%) 18% reduction.
Bulk Ground Beef/Pork	Reduced from 22-24% to 18-20%) 18% reduction.
Canned Beef	Reduced from 15-18% to 15-17%) 6% reduction.
Canned Pork	Reduced from 18-21% to 15-17%) 17% reduction.
Pork Patties, Rib-Shaped-CK, SOC	Reduced from 20-21% to 18-20%) 10% reduction.
POULTRY	
Canned Boned Chicken	Reduced from 14% to 9.5%) 32% reduction.
Turkey Burgers/Ground Turkey	Purchased in SY 94-95 with fat level of 11-12.5%

Turkey Sausage Links, Patties, SOC	Purchased in SY 94-95 with fat level of 13-14.5%
Turkey Sausage Chubs	Purchased in SY 94-95 with fat level of 13-14.5%.
MEAT ALTERNATES	
All Purpose Egg Mix	Purchased in SY 94-95 with 4% vegetable oil.
Reduced Fat Cheddar Cheese	Purchased in SY 94-95 w/fat level of 19.2-22.9% vs. a minimum fat content of 30.5% in regular cheddar cheese.
FRUITS/VEGETABLES & OTHER FOODS	
Canned Salsa	Purchased in SY 1993-94 as regular entitlement.
Oils	Eliminated use of tropical oils in peanut butter and other products containing oil.
Reduced Calorie Salad Dressing	Purchased In SY 1993-94 with a maximum fat content of 3 grams per 1-tbsp. serving vs. 5 grams per 1-tbsp. contained in regular salad dressing.

Appendix 2
(2 of 2)

Past Commodity Improvements
(SY 1984-85 to FY 1994-95 - Cont'd)

Figure 5 - Sodium and Sugar Modifications

COMMODITY	SALT/SODIUM, SUGAR REDUCTIONS
SALT/SODIUM REDUCTIONS	
Canned Boned Chicken/Turkey	Reduced salt level from a 1.1 - 1.3 to 0.5% - 0.7%.
All Canned Vegetables	Reduced salt level to a maximum of 1% or less.
SUGAR REDUCTIONS	
All Canned Fruit	Packed in light syrup or natural juices since 1980.

In addition to the above, USDA doubled the quantity of fresh fruits and vegetables purchased in SY 1994-95. These purchases included: fresh apples, carrots, grapefruits, oranges, pears, and potatoes.

Acknowledgements

Assisting the FCS, which served as lead agency for this major commodity specification review, were staff from AMS's Livestock and Seed Division, Poultry Division and Fruit and Vegetable Division and FSA's Procurement and Donations Division (PDD).

The AMS staff conducted the review of the fat, sodium and sugar levels of all commodity specifications developed for Group A type products (i.e., beef, pork, poultry, fish, fruits and vegetables). They coordinated communications with appropriate representatives from the food processing industry; provided FCS with their findings and recommendations regarding how USDA could improve the nutritional quality of Group A commodities purchased for States and schools.

Joan Turetsky, nutritionist, represented AMS's Livestock and Seed Division. Carmen Houston, Agricultural Marketing Specialist, conducted the data collection and analysis for AMS's Poultry Division. Sandra Gardei, Assistant Branch Chief, Commodity Procurement Branch, directed the review for AMS's Fruits and Vegetables Division. Ms. Gardei was assisted by Mary Muster, Agricultural Marketing Specialist for AMS.

The FSA staff conducted the review of the fat, sodium and sugar levels for all commodity specifications developed for Group B products (i.e., dairy, grains, oils, nuts). Indulis Kancitis, Chief of PDD's Dairy Branch, managed the review of specifications for all dairy products including butter, milk and cheese. Mr. Kancitis was assisted by Diane Lewis, Dairy Product Marketing Specialist for AMS. Bonnie Tanner, Chief of PDD's Domestic Programs Branch, directed work on the project for all specifications dealing with grains, oils, nuts, and cereals. Ms. Tanner was assisted by Charles Emler, Connie Stewart and Sandra LeSesne, Agricultural Marketing Specialists for FSA and Dean Jenson, Contract Management Branch.

FCS's Nutrition and Technical Service Division (NTSD) provided technical assistance to the task force and participated in the data collection effort. Lorie Conneen, nutritionist in NTSD, assisted the Food Distribution Division (FDD) staff by summarizing the fat and sodium information listed in an official Departmental publication entitled, "*Facts About USDA Commodities*." In addition, Joan White, Program Analyst in FDD, assisted the project coordinators in compiling and summarizing nutrition data prepared by NTSD for this study.

The task force project coordinators from FCS were FDD's Susan E. Proden, former Deputy Director; Beverly King, Chief, Commodity, Analysis, Monitoring and Improvement Branch; and Ron Johnson, Management Analyst.